

MAINE FIRE PROTECTION SERVICES COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES JANUARY 14, 2002

The meeting of the Commission was called to order by Vice-Chairman Darrel Fournier at 1:05 P.M. Members present: Michael Albert, Jay Bradshaw, John Cannon, Darrel Fournier, Al Godfrey, Jeff Maker, Harty Norris, Jethro Pease, Dave Wacker, Steve Willis and Susan Pinette (Staff). Members excused: Jack Berry, Jeff Cammack, John Dean, Ted Johnston, Randy Keep, Bill O’Gara, Michael Quint and Christine Savage. Member absent: Tom Parent. Guest: Joe Thomas - Fire Marshal Office.

The minutes of the January 7, 2002 Commission meeting were accepted as amended on page 2, line 10 in the first paragraph under New Business. “in favor of” is deleted and replaced with “neither for nor against”.

Old Business

Jay Bradshaw and Susan Pinette spoke on developing the contract with Penflex Company for the recruitment and retention study and it is about to be sent to Penflex for their approval.

Darrel Fournier advised he has been in contact with Milliman USA of Boston, Massachusetts, President Andy Johnson, and they are very interested in doing the study for the healthcare bridge. He thanked Jay Bradshaw for E-mailing him this contact. John Cannon advised that he has been trying to get in contact with Foster Hewett Associates as they may be interested in doing the study. He also advised he had received another contact from the IAFF this past Friday afternoon and hasn’t had a chance to pass it on. Darrel expressed concern with getting several companies on the line and tying up the process so that the study isn’t started in the near future. Millennium USA has stated that they believe they can do the study for \$ 15,000. regarding the amount of work we want to do. John Cannon, Randy Keep and Ted Johnston are on the sub-committee and Darrel will be in contact with them for a meeting as soon as he receives something in writing. Jay Bradshaw advised that justification might be necessary to explain why a particular firm was selected when we go to State Purchases to award a contract.

The meeting then moved to a discussion of the draft Commission Report to the Governor and Legislature. At the last meeting we spent a great deal of time fleshing out the first draft that Susan Pinette had presented. Susan advised she has additional information from Ted Johnston and that she was waiting for information from Randy Keep and John Dean to complete the second draft. As Randy and John were unable to attend this meeting, she will be in contact with them to try to have the work completed before the next Commission meeting.

Darrell Fournier advised that he had checked on costs of healthcare programs and was pleasantly surprised with the information he obtained. He called New Hampshire about their comprehensive healthcare plan for retired firefighters and found there are more career fighters there than in Maine. The cost on their healthcare program for a single person on the plan is \$236.67 based on a 20-year retirement program and age 45. For 2 people on the plan the cost is \$473.34. These costs are far below the costs that have been discussed in the past and this is funded through the state retirement system in New Hampshire. It was concluded that the Commission should be in contact with Anthem Blue

Cross-Blue Shield in Maine to see if we can determine a cost in this state along with New Hampshire's before we go before the Legislature with our package. John Cannon will look into this for the Commission.

New Business

Darrel Fournier advised that Sen. O'Gara had called him this morning and requested that the Commission start to prepare proposed legislation to be submitted to the current session. At this point in time if we can develop the bill titles, we can then flesh out the bills in the weeks to come. It was concluded that the Commission is not ready at this time to present a bill for a centralized fire-training academy. We, however, are ready to submit legislation on funding for the Fire Marshal Office and Maine Fire Training and Education. Also there may not be time enough left to submit legislation on the health care plan and recruitment and retention program. Sen. O'Gara wants the titles settled today so he can set up a meeting with the Governor's office for us to meet and try to get the Governor's support. Also, the insurance industry will be proposing a funding idea for several of these programs.

A motion by Jeff Maker, 2nd by Jay Bradshaw to tie the healthcare for firefighters and recruitment and retention together into one bill with a title presented by John Cannon as a friendly amendment "An Act to Enhance Recruitment, Retention and Healthcare for Maine Firefighters" was approved by a unanimous vote.

The next issues were funding for the FMO and MFT&E and a consensus determined that the discussion be postponed until the next Commission meeting so that John Dean can be present. Steve Willis will be unable to attend that meeting but will be ably represented by Ed Marks who has been purported to be able to talk nearly as much as Steve and will handle the MFT&E portion of the discussion. Steve Willis was granted a request to address the Commission today and reported that he strongly feels that the two funding issues should stay together contrary to the insurance industry's belief. Randy Keep was reported to once having been opposed to the two being tied together, however, now is in agreement. Randy's personal research has identified how closely the missions of the two organizations relate to each other and why they should be linked together. Steve concluded that united the two organizations should stand solid and divided he firmly believes they will fall as their endeavors so closely related to each other.

Darrell Fournier asked the Commission members to mark their calendars on Tuesday night, February 12, 2002 from 4:00 to 7:00 P.M. for the Legislative reception program hosted by the Maine Fire Chief's Association, Maine State Federation of Fire Fighters, Professional Fire Fighters of Maine and Maine Fire Training and Education at the Ground Round restaurant by the Augusta Civic Center. He requested that Commission members and the four organizations membership contact their Senators and Representatives requesting their attendance and also for the fire chiefs to turn out in good numbers so that we can enlighten the legislative members on what the fire service is trying to accomplish. It was suggested that we have copies of the preliminary Commission report available for distribution and discussion at the reception. Also it was agreed that we might have our PowerPoint presentation scrolling along on a television set that folks could watch if they wanted to and this might stimulate discussion. Darrel agreed to E-mail Steve Willis the notice of the reception with at least 24 echoes so that Steve can forward it on to the MFT&E network.

A discussion ensued on current legislation and Jay Bradshaw advised that LD 1015 which is John Tuttle's bill An Act Providing Health Insurance for Firefighters, a carryover bill, has a hearing this Thursday at the Labor Committee at 9:00 A.M. in Room 220. Also Darrell Fournier reported there is a workshop on the computer program at 9:30 A.M. on Thursday with the Criminal Justice Committee and that the hearing on LD 1946 An Act to Protect Volunteer Firefighters Regular Employment is being held tomorrow at 1:30 P.M. in Room 220. After a discussion the Commission agreed to take no stand on LD 1946.

The next meeting of the Commission will be held on Monday, January 28, 2002 at 1:00 P.M. in Room 438 (Judiciary Committee Hearing Room) in the State House in Augusta as the EMS conference room isn't available that day. The meetings to follow will be held on Tuesday, February 12, 2002 (to coincide with the legislative reception) and Monday, February 25, 2002 at 1:00 P.M. both at the State EMS headquarters in Augusta.

With no further business to come before the Commission, the meeting adjourned at 2:02 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Albert L. Godfrey, Sr., P.E., P.L.S., C.S.E.
Secretary